

## **Interactive Preposition Game to Improve the Usage of Preposition of Place Among Year 4 Pupils**

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### **Abstract**

This study was designed to improve the pupils' grammar specifically in preposition of place using Interactive Preposition Game (IPG) as a teaching and learning strategy. The participants of the study were Year 4 pupils from a primary school and the researcher was the teacher who conducted the action research in the classroom and the cycle of the intervention had been done once. The data collected were tests, supported with interview and teacher's reflective journal. Improvement was shown based on the data obtained as there was an increase of mean scores in the second test (82%) compared to first test (25%). Moreover, it was found that IPG was able to enhance pupils' understanding, motivation and promote fun learning in the classroom. The results of the study indicated that the pupils had positive behaviours and responses towards the use of IPG in learning grammar.

**Keywords:** interactive, preposition, game, preposition of place, grammar

### **A. Introduction**

Grammar has always been considered as an essential substance in teaching English especially in English as a second language (ESL) environment such as in Malaysia (Mukundan & Norwati, 2009). Prepositions can be perceived as one of the difficult topics to be mastered by the second language learners. According to Morenberg (2007), prepositions are always considered as the most crucial elements in teaching English particularly in the teaching of speaking and writing skills.

Prepositions are very confusing and sometimes hardly understandable even for native speakers, and when it comes to learners of English as a Second Language (ESL), the problem is bigger, because they have to understand all the nuances of the English prepositions, to memorise them and to properly use them. Despite these challenges, prepositions are hardly addressed in the current teaching methods. Teachers often find prepositions hard to teach. Sometimes when they want to explain a preposition they use one or two other prepositions to give the definition. Many English coursebooks have just a general overview of prepositions and do not provide specific rules on their usage. So most of the time important aspects of the acquisition of prepositions are not mentioned at all, such as when a certain preposition has more than one meaning depending on the context it is used in.

### **Problems of Using Preposition of Place in the Classroom**

In my past teaching experience, I had taught English language for Year 4 pupils at a primary school in a rural area and most of them had low proficiency in the subject. During the teaching and learning process, I discovered that most pupils were unable to grasp the concept of preposition of place correctly and this lowered their interest in learning grammar. The problem with preposition is normal among non-native speakers as it portrays so many meanings and different contexts are dependant on the situation of the sentence or speaker (Lindstromberg,

2011). For an instance, when I taught the pupils about preposition of place, almost the whole class could not describe and understand some prepositions such as 'below', 'above', and 'between'. Even after several explanations, they still forgot about the meaning of the words. Most of the exercises they did contained numerous errors and some did the exercise only for the sake of completing their work on time.

This makes it hard for the pupils to really understand the basic meaning of the preposition words as it may confuse them during their process of learning the grammar concept. Moreover, pupils are tend to misuse the prepositions because the structure of sentences in their native language are different from English.

Tetreault and Chodorow (2008) also supported that the errors which deal with prepositions are the most common among English as a Second Language (ESL) learners. They explained that the non-native speakers will have difficult time to master the in-depth meaning of preposition. Based on my practicum, I definitely agree with the statement as it happened in my own classroom when pupils could not use preposition the way it is supposed to be used, not just during grammar lesson, they also could not do well in writing lessons. For an example, during writing lessons such as guided writing, most pupils in the classroom could not connect some words provided using the accurate preposition, making their sentence meaningless or totally out of context. Thus, teacher should emphasise more on teaching preposition so that pupils can improve their grammar as well as their writing

I decided to use Interactive Preposition Game (IPG) as my intervention strategy to enhance my pupils' knowledge on preposition of place. These pupils needed help to improve their grammar as well as to boost up their motivation in learning grammar in a fun way. Therefore, the following research questions were formulated in order to meet the research objectives.

1. How does the Interactive Preposition Game help Year 4 pupils to improve their learning of preposition of place?
2. How does the Interactive Preposition Game help me to improve my teaching practices in grammar teaching?

## **B. Literature Review**

### **1. Technology in Teaching and Learning**

The positive impact of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the teaching and learning process is undeniable. Using technology in class has a positive effect on pupils' attitude towards learning and makes the learning process enjoyable. Creating a fun and exciting learning environment is vital as Krashen (1982) stated that when a learning situation has a low affective filter, it lessens learners' anxiety and make the learners more comfortable. As Rabah (2015) asserted, the use of ICT is a powerful tool for enhancing the learning process as studies revealed that higher engagement levels and higher motivation levels in students were observed when ICT was integrated in the teaching and learning process in the classroom. The use of technology can also be incorporated during English lessons to enhance pupils' learning. Bahous, Bacha & Nabhani (2011) pointed out that learners will definitely be encouraged and motivated to use the target language when new forms of technologies are incorporated in the language class.

In this study, I decided to use IPG as a technological tool for my intervention because the integration of technology in language learning in classrooms would be able to attract pupils and motivate them to learn grammar. Besides that, the use of IPG in learning grammar is a step towards meeting the criteria for this rapidly globalising 21st century learning as it is ICT salient.

### **2. Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning**

The study also adopts Mayers' (2009) cognitive theory of multimedia learning. According to the theory, learners learn more deeply and attempt to build meaningful connections between words and graphics than from words alone. This is because multimedia supports the way that the human brain learns (Sorden, 2012). People learn more from a combination of both words and pictures rather than from words alone. The words need not necessarily be in the written form only. Words can be both spoken or written, while pictures can be any form of graphics. These graphics include illustrations, photos, animation, or video.

Parveen & Rajesh (2011) conducted a research to examine the effect of multimedia in teaching English. Pre-test and post-test were conducted to evaluate the actual outcome of using

the multimedia tools in teaching English. It was found that the improvement in their students' scores after using the multimedia tools was 32%. The significant increase in the scores confirms the premises that interactive multimedia is very effective in teaching English. A study by Ranjit (2011) also revealed that the use of multimedia in learning grammar was indeed effective as mean scores of the experimental group (taught using multimedia) was higher than that of the control group (taught using conventional instructional strategy). Therefore, it can be concluded that by using IPG to teach preposition of place, pupils would be able to differentiate better the usage of the various preposition of place correctly.

### **C. Methodology**

#### *1. Research Design*

In this research, I had selected the action research model proposed by Kemmis & McTaggart (1988). According to this model, there are four basic steps in an action research cycle which are plan, act, observe, and reflect.

#### *2. Research Participants*

This research was carried out in a primary school called School with Few Pupils (Sekolah Kurang Murid). In Malaysia, there is a number of this kind of schools in which the enrolment is not more than 150 pupils for the whole school. The selected Year 4 class was the only class for Year 4 in this school and it consisted of only ten pupils. So, the participants involved in this research were only ten pupils. They were four males and six females with mixed-ability. All the pupils were Malays and they came from a middle and low social economic status background. Therefore, they had less exposure to the use of English language. The pupils' first language was the Malay language and based on my observations, they only used the Malay language to communicate with one another. The pupils also told me that they did not use English language to communicate with their family members at home. This might be one of the factors which explained the pupils' poor understanding of grammar as the pupils were of a low proficiency in the English language. The pupils often struggled to understand simple instructions given by the teacher using the English language.

#### *3. Technique of Data Collection*

Figure 1 shows the flow chart of the four stages of implementation process I had carried out for this action research. During the planning stage, I had planned to help the pupils of Year 4 on the topic preposition of place after identifying their problem during my last teaching and learning process. Thus, to prove that the pupils were weak on the particular topic, I carried out a diagnostic test focusing on preposition, mainly the preposition of time and preposition of place. Evidently, the pupils were very poor in the preposition of place. Based on the test result, it was clear that the pupils did not understand how to use the preposition even though they had learned them during Year 3. To further understand the situation of the pupils, I interviewed their English teacher to identify their level of proficiency, behaviour in classroom and learning styles. Following the interview, I had come up with a suitable technique which was IPG to suit their learning of grammar. Afterwards, I planned several lesson plans according to implement the technique in the classroom.

During the action stage, I introduced IPG to the pupils. The strategy was used to explain the meaning for preposition of place with pictures followed by sentences to make the pupils more understand on its usage. Then, I showed them that there were several activities that could be done. The questions provided in IPG were guided by pictures so that they could easily remember the meaning for every preposition mentioned. After they understood the usage of the preposition, the pupils were given the chance to practice their skills with IPG. They also had the chance to collaborate with their peers through group and pair work activities during the lesson.

The action stage took place for about three weeks where the introductions was done for a week while two weeks for the implementation of action. I had included different prepositions of place for each lesson. The activities also changed from group work to pair work to individual work in order to make sure all of them were responsible towards the knowledge that they had gained. On the final week, I conducted another test, which was the post-test. It was to check on the improvement of pupils' understanding on the topic preposition of place after the implementation of IPG.

For the observation stage, I wrote my reflective journal to keep track on the pupils' progress after each session. I recorded the effectiveness of the instructional strategies, pupils' behaviour towards the lesson and the their progress in understanding the topic. As mentioned by Cimer, Cimer & Vekli (2013), reflection is vital for teachers and it leads to the professional development and growth of teachers.

On the reflection stage, I reflected based on the data I had collected throughout the implementation during action and observation stages. Figure 1 below illustrates the steps of intervention I had taken.

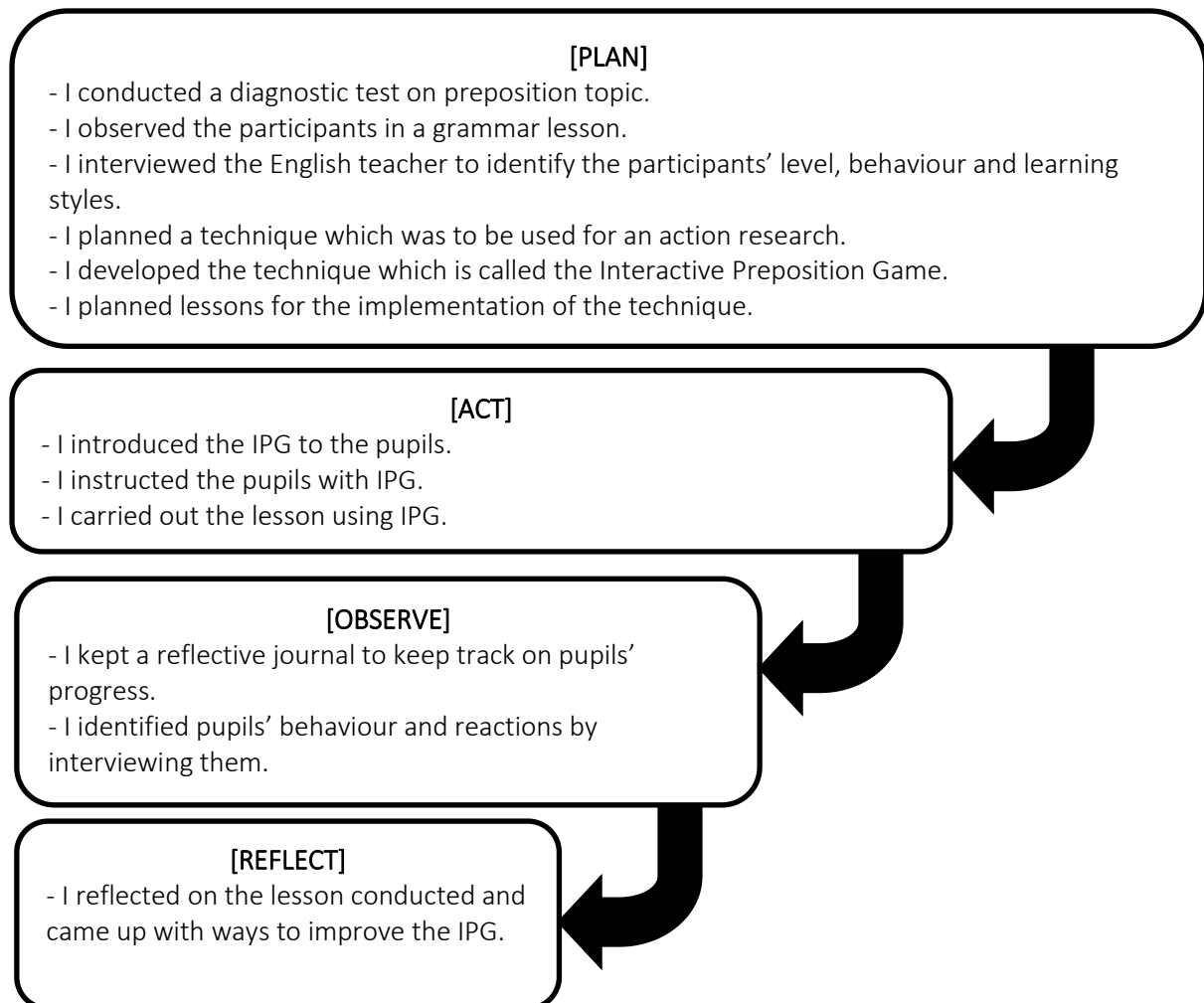


Figure 1. Stages of Action

#### *4. Instruments*

In this research, I had utilized three data gathering methods to determine the accuracy and credibility of my findings by applying the concept of triangulation. Data triangulation method is the process of verifying evidence from different individuals, types of data or methods of data collection to ensure the study would be more accurate as information was drawn from multiple sources (Creswell, 2012). The three data collection methods that I had employed were: tests, teacher's reflective journal and, interview.

#### *5. Data Analysis and Interpretation*

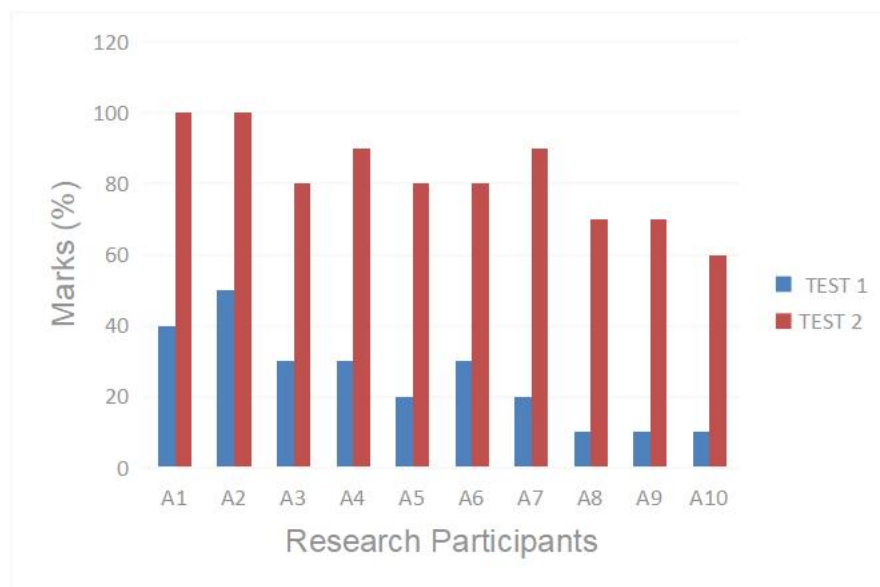
In this section, the data collected using the tests were analysed quantitatively while teacher's reflective journal and interview were analysed qualitatively. Their results were discussed below.

(a) Test

Table 1 and Figure 2 show the results for Test 1 and Test 2. According to Table 1, there were three participants that only scored 10% which was the lowest marks among other participants. Two participants (A5 and A7) had scored 20% for test 1 while participants A3, A4 and A6 had managed to score 30% in the test. Participant A1 were able to score 40% while participant A2 scored 50% which was the highest marks for Test 1. However, all of the participants managed to show improvement by the end of the implementation as their differences of marks between Test 1 and test 2 showed positive growth. Participant A7 has shown a huge improvement climbing from 20% for Test 1 to 90% for the Test 2. This shows that the participant had the highest difference made which was 70%. As for other participants, they managed to improve with an increase of 50% and 60% from Test 1 to Test 2.

**Table 1. Comparisons of the Results of Test 1 and Test 2**

Research Participants	Test 1 (%)	Test 2 (%)	Difference (%)
A1	40	100	60
A2	50	100	50
A3	30	80	50
A4	30	90	60
A5	20	80	60
A6	30	80	50
A7	20	90	70
A8	10	70	60
A9	10	70	60
A10	10	60	50

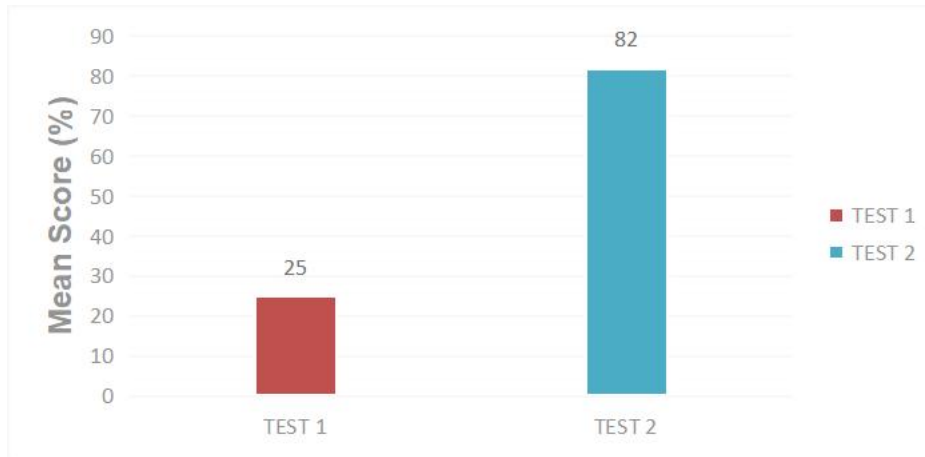


**Figure 2. Results of Test 1 and Test 2**

In Table 2 and Figure 3, it can be seen that the mean for Test 1 was 25% while the mean for Test 2 is 82%. This shows there were improvements of the marks gained by the research participants from both tests conducted. According to Creswell (2012), standard deviation is important as it functions as the indicator to show the dispersion of scores. Without standard deviation, it is hard to compare the data effectively (Rumsey, 2016). Table 4 shows the difference of the standard deviation was low, which was 13.5 for Test 1 and 13.2 for Test 2 indicating that the dispersion of marks were not too far away among the participants and also proved the validity of the tests conducted.

**Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation of Test 1 and Test 2**

	<b>Test 1</b>	<b>Test 2</b>
Mean	25	82
Standard Deviation	13.5	13.2



**Figure 3. Mean Score of Test 1 and Test 2**

*(b) Interview*

There were three themes that emerged from the interview. They were interest, understanding and participation. The first question of the interview was asking the participants about what they thought about the strategy of IPG. All of the participants gave positive response towards it. This shows that they were very interested about the strategy. Participants A3 and A4 stated that they loved IPG because of the interesting games which made them like to learn the preposition of place. Participant A5 said that the pictures provided made the lesson more fun and easy to understand without feeling threaten by the topic. Therefore, all participants were interested in using IPG.

Second question was about their understanding about preposition of place by learning using the IPG. Participant A1 noted that the IPG helped him to understand how to use the preposition of place when making sentences while participant A3 stated that the pictures provided in the game made him understand better about the preposition of place instead of by doing activities with worksheets. Participant A4 said that she had the problem with the words 'below' and 'above' and always swapped meaning between the two words. Also participant A5 said that explanation and animation shown in IPG made helped her remember easily. Thus, the participants had improved their understanding by using IPG.

The third question asked about participants' participation during lesson using IPG. From their answers, they clearly loved to participate in the lesson that included IPG. This was because they became very active in the lesson by asking questions, helping others and working cooperatively in groups when playing the game. They were motivated to learn when using IPG hence giving active participation during lesson.

*(c) Teacher's Reflective Journal*

From the reflective journals, the themes emerged were participation, motivation and co-operation. I could observe that the research participants were very active in participating during the lesson which included IPG. All of the participants were actively involved during the activities which helped them to understand the concept of preposition of place when compared to previous lesson that did not involve ICT in lessons especially grammar. I could also see some improvements on the participants' behaviour during the lesson where they became very attentive towards the instructions that I gave during interventions.

Other than that, the participants were always very motivated when doing the activities. This could closely related to the ICT tools that was used for the intervention and the game which

catered for their learning style. Their motivation was shown when they were determined to finish the tasks given on time and by asking more questions. Also, their motivation was shown when they had competition among them as they worked in groups and pairs in order to win the game.

I could also see collaboration among the research participants during the activities. Their collaboration also showed they were able to work as a team and were organised to finish the work given. They assigned themselves different tasks so that they could finish all the tasks given on time.

#### **D. Findings and Discussion**

This section would discuss how the Interactive Preposition Game answered the two following research questions.

##### ***Research Question 1***

*How does the Interactive Preposition Game help Year 4 pupils to improve their learning of preposition of place?*

Based on the results of in the tests, the use of Interactive Preposition Game was able to help the pupils in improving their understanding of the preposition of place. From the results of the Test 1 and Test 2, there were improvements in the research participants' marks. All of them managed to show improvement as their Test 2 results increased from Test 1. A drastic improvement was shown by participant A7 as her result for Test 2 was 90% compared to Test 1 which was only 20%. There was 70% of difference between the two tests. The mean score also increased from 25% in Test 1 to 82% in Test 2. This indicates that the use of IPG did help the research participants to improve their usage of preposition of place. This is supported by Mayer (2009) who asserted that learners learn more effectively when multimedia-mediated content is incorporated into the learning environment compared to information which is presented only through a single medium.

Furthermore, I also interviewed the pupils to know more about their opinions of using IPG. The research participants responded positively in the interview. A majority of them could not understand the preposition of place at first but after the implementation of IPG they showed understanding towards the lesson. They agreed the fun elements provided in the game had helped them so much in learning preposition of place and the pictures helped them understand the meanings of the prepositions easily. Other than that, the participants responded that they were very interested in learning grammar because of IPG. This caused the participants to become more motivated to participate in the lessons using IPG which eventually helped them understand and remember about the preposition of place. As supported by Mayers' (2005) cognitive theory of multimedia learning, learners learn more deeply and attempt to build meaningful connections between words and graphics than from words alone. Rabah (2015) also supports the use of ICT is a powerful tool for enhancing the learning process as studies revealed that higher engagement levels and higher motivation levels in students were observed when ICT was integrated in the teaching and learning process in the classroom.

##### ***Research Question 2***

*How does the Interactive Preposition Game help me to improve my teaching practices in grammar teaching?*

Appropriate and engaging strategy have played a big role to help pupils in improving their learning problems in the classroom. That is why teachers needs to come up with a strategy that could help them to improve their teaching practice. According to Mills (2014), teacher's journals are an on-going attempt by teachers to systematically reflect on their practice by constructing a narrative that honour the unique and powerful voice of the teacher's language. So, to answer the second research question, I had used teacher's reflective journal.

The themes emerged from the reflective journals were participation, motivation and co-operation. I could see the increase of participation among pupils during activities. With the help of the Interactive Preposition Game, I noticed the change of behaviours of the pupils. Some of

the pupils were considered disruptive by the teacher but these pupils became very interested and gave good co-operation during the intervention.

Also, I found that the research participants were motivated to learn and they were able to answer the questions on preposition of place with the help of the Interactive Preposition Game. Pupils became more curious in the topic and some of them were able to answer questions that led them to know beyond the topic that they had learned.

Furthermore, I could see that the cooperation among the pupils was better than before as they were able to work as a team during activities. The game made them eager to win and they had to work together effectively in order to win the game. All these positive results clearly showed me that the Interactive Preposition Game could help the teachers to improve their teaching practice by using strategies that are engaging and appropriate for their pupils.

## E. Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of IPG is very useful for pupils in learning preposition of place. Students are more active, eager to learn as it engages a fun learning in a classroom.

This study is on the use of interactive multimedia in learning grammar focusing on preposition of place. In this 21st century learning, it is high time for teachers to realize the full potential of multimedia learning and incorporate them in their teaching and learning sessions. Therefore, based on the analysis and findings presented, there are two suggestions that I would like to propose in order to enhance and sustain pupils' learning.

My first suggestion is to modify the Interactive Preposition Game to be more sophisticated and include more functions by the teacher for the pupils to use. Instead of using a simple software such as Microsoft Powerpoint, the tool can be designed by using other complex and detailed softwares such as Scratch, Unreal Engine, Unity 3D and much more that can easily accessed from the internet. There are many features that can be made possible in the tool such as 'drag and drop' or the help Artificial Intelligence that can act as an assistant for the teachers who do not know how to use simple softwares.

Next, I would like to propose for the next researchers to use the Interactive Preposition Game by including other grammar components such as adverbs, adjectives and nouns. An advantage of this interactive game is that it is versatile, in which it can be reused to teach and learn other grammar components. Thus, it saves the teachers from all the trouble as they can just reuse the available templates to teach other grammar items by simply changing the content.

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